



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

April 21, 2005

# News Release

## **MAN WHO LAUNDERED MILLIONS IN DRUG FUNDS THROUGH U.S. CASINOS GETS LIFE IN PRISON AND \$15 MILLION FINE**

***-- Individual Served as Chief Money Launderer for Major Drug Trafficking Organization --***

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – A key player in a nationwide drug trafficking and money laundering ring was sentenced to life in prison and ordered to pay \$15 million earlier this week here as the result of a multi-agency investigation led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

Charles Anthony Roybal, 60, the owner of C.A. Roybal Bail Bonding was convicted on federal money laundering, structuring, and drug conspiracy violations. He appeared in federal court Tuesday in Albuquerque, where he received a life sentence from U.S. District Court Judge William Johnson. A federal jury in Albuquerque convicted Roybal in February 2004 on 57 counts of money laundering, structuring, criminal asset forfeiture, and drug conspiracy violations.

“This life sentence and \$15 million fine send a strong message about the high priority ICE places on dismantling major criminal organizations, such as this one that caused corruption at the highest levels,” said Ronald J. Wood, special agent in charge. “Criminal operations will never be able to compete against the committed forces of our law enforcement partners.” Wood heads the ICE El Paso Office of Investigations for West Texas and New Mexico.

Roybal was one of seven men and two women named in a 68-count indictment unsealed in March 2003, and superseded in June 2003. The indictment accused Gabriel David Gomez, Roybal and seven other defendants with operating a New Mexico-based criminal organization that smuggled more than 15 tons of marijuana into the United States, and distributed the illegal drugs throughout the country.

The indictment resulted from a lengthy money laundering multi-agency investigation led by ICE special agents in New Mexico, in conjunction with the IRS, FBI, and the New Mexico State Police.

Roybal was accused of being the financial manager for the drug trafficking organization. Among other things, the indictment alleged that Roybal laundered proceeds from the illegal drug operation through casinos in Albuquerque and Las Vegas.

According to the indictment, Roybal used illegal drug proceeds to buy gambling chips from the Sandia Casino in New Mexico, and the Palms and Golden Nugget casinos in Las Vegas. He redeemed the gambling chips for “clean” U.S. currency as part of the laundering scheme. He used cash as payment on casino lines of credit. None of the casinos are accused of any wrongdoing.

The indictment further alleged that members of the drug operation used drug money to purchase several real estate properties in New Mexico, as well as a 1978 Rolls Royce, a 1997 Corvette, a 1986 BMW 535, and \$15,000 in home furnishings from a Sears store in New Mexico.

Gomez, the ringleader of the narcotics organization, pleaded to conspiracy to distribute marijuana, money laundering, structuring transactions to avoid reporting requirements, and criminal asset forfeiture in January 2004. He is scheduled to be sentenced May 19. He faces a maximum sentence of life prison.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*